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## QUALIFICATIONS STATEMENTS FOR POSITIONS IN THE FIELD SERVICE OF THE FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

### I. GENERAL

A. A qualifications statement for a position includes statements of the kinds of knowledges, abilities, skills and personal qualities necessary for successful performance of the work of that position, followed by statements of experience, education, training, physical and examination requirements which are acceptable as objective evidences that an individual has those characteristics. It answers the question: What should be the qualifications of an applicant who seeks to enter the position? In brief, a qualifications statement is a word-picture of the particular type of individual needed to perform the work to be done in a position.

B. Qualifications statements may be written and designed to serve as minimum or desirable standards. Minimum statements include only absolutely essential factors, lack of which makes unlikely satisfactory performance on the job, and include requirements of sufficiently low level to make possible the elimination only of obviously unqualified persons while permitting the giving of thorough consideration to persons not obviously disqualified for successful performance on the job. Desirable statements include those factors considered to increase greatly an employee's potential usefulness, but which are not used as criteria in determining the eligibility of a candidate competing for a position. Desirable statements provide ideal or optimum standards while minimum statements specify the lowest acceptable requirements.

### II. DEVELOPMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS STATEMENTS

A. Legal authority for establishing qualifications statements for positions in the Farm Security Administration is contained in the Classification Act of 1923, as amended, and the Veterans' Preference Act of 1944.

1. Section 3 of the Classification Act of 1923, as amended, provides that (1) with certain exceptions, positions shall be classified on the basis of their duties and responsibilities, and (2) minimum qualifications shall be established which will assure satisfactory performance of such tasks and duties as are required in the positions.

2. Section 11 of the Veterans' Preference Act of 1944, authorizes the Civil Service Commission to promulgate appropriate rules and regulations for the administration of the provisions of the Act, which is designed to establish employment preference for veterans, their widows and the wives of disabled veterans in unclassified as well as the classified Civil Service. Civil Service Circular 519, "Regulations for the Administration and Enforcement of the Veterans' Preference Act of 1944 in the Unclassified Service" provides that prior to making appointments under provisions of the Act "the agency shall establish standards for eligibility such as those relating to experience and training, citizenship, age, physical condition, etc., which standards shall relate to the duties to be performed .... Any such standard shall be made a matter of record in the appropriate office of the agency----."

B. The overall objective of the National Personnel Division is to develop formal qualifications statements for every position in the Farm Security Administration. Responsibility for achieving this objective is divided between the

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National Personnel Office and the regional personnel offices. Qualifications statements for all standard positions contained in FSA's manual of standard job descriptions will be developed and issued by the National Personnel Office. It is the responsibility of the Regional Personnel Officer to develop qualifications statements for the non-standard positions in his region. On the premise that those directly responsible for getting a job done effectively and efficiently know best the quality of personnel needed to do the job, it is the policy to utilize the subject matter knowledge of those employees in the National and regional offices who have the responsibility for getting a particular job done. By applying the skills of personnel technicians to such "on the job" information as may be obtained from the operating officials, it is felt that the validity and practical value of the qualifications statements can be greatly increased. With this policy, supervisory and administrative personnel must play an important role in developing the statements for jobs under their supervision and direction. Personnel officers, logically, must furnish leadership in carrying out the project and must furnish technical advice, as necessary, based upon their knowledge of recruitment and testing procedures, interviewing techniques, the labor market, education programs in universities and colleges, personnel policies of FSA, and other general personnel policies and procedures.

### III. FORM AND CONTENT OF QUALIFICATIONS STATEMENTS

A. The qualifications statements issued should be filed in a manual similar to the manual of standard job descriptions previously issued by the Classification Section of the National Personnel Division. The position titles, class and series codes used on the qualifications statements are identical with those used in the manual of standard job descriptions. In setting up the manual of qualifications statements, the statements should be filed in the same order as are the standard jobs in the manual of standard job descriptions, i.e., first by service, then by series code and grade. Each qualifications statement is composed of five separate sections: (1) knowledges, abilities and other qualities; (2) experience, training and education; (3) physical standards; (4) examinations and other requirements; and (5) additional qualifications which are desirable but not required. The first four sections constitute a minimum qualifications statement for the position and the additional qualifications specified in section 5, when added to the statement, make it a statement of desirable qualifications.

B. Knowledges, Abilities and Other Qualities: Under this section of the qualifications statement are set forth the knowledges, abilities, skills, aptitudes, personal attributes and other qualities that the work of the position demands. The knowledge and ability pattern of each position is important as a basis for personnel operations and transactions concerning the position. It covers all knowledge and ability qualities which the duties and responsibilities of the position call for, notwithstanding that in some instances examination techniques to measure them reliably and validly have not been developed. An attempt has been made, therefore, to express the knowledges, abilities, etc., in terms sufficiently precise to aid in making examination items or questions in the future.

#### 1. Knowledge:

First in order are given statements which show the subjects, topics or things the individual must know. The degree or amount of knowledge must be indicated because the depth and breadth of knowledge required advance in

proportion to the importance, difficulty and responsibility of the work performed. Expressions used to show various degrees of knowledge are as follows:

a. Some acquaintance with:

Some acquaintance with a phase or field of work enables the individual to recognize, identify and properly associate the basic terminology and work tools used in that phase or field, but does not provide the individual with sufficient knowledge to use them without additional training or instruction.

b. Some knowledge of:

Some knowledge of a phase or field of work enables the individual to recognize, identify and properly associate the basic terminology and work tools used in that phase or field, and enables him to use such basic terminology and work tools to perform simple and elementary tasks in the phase or field of work.

c. Working knowledge of:

A working knowledge of a phase or field of work enables the individual to recognize, identify and understand the basic terminology and work tools used in that phase or field, and enables him, independently, to perform tasks of average difficulty, but does not enable the individual to perform tasks which require the solution of problems of more than average difficulty.

d. Good general knowledge:

A good general knowledge of a phase or field of work enables the individual to understand and use the terminology, work tools, and modern theories of that phase or field, and enables him to perform tasks that are of more than average difficulty and require the solution of difficult problems in the process of performance. Although an individual with this degree of knowledge cannot solve the more difficult problems easily and quickly, his knowledge is such that he knows where to search for the solution and can solve the more difficult problems through research or reference study.

e. Thorough knowledge of:

A thorough knowledge of a phase or field of work enables the individual easily to understand and use all terminology, work tools and modern theories of that phase or field, and enables him to perform tasks of any difficulty which require the solution of unusual problems in the process of performance. An individual with this degree of knowledge is able to solve unusual problems by drawing upon his store of knowledge which has been acquired through intensive study or specialized experience, and normally does not have to resort to research or reference study for solution to such problems.

f. Comprehensive and detailed knowledge:

A comprehensive and detailed knowledge is the broadest degree of knowledge of a phase or field of work that an individual normally acquires. An individual with this degree of knowledge knows the phase or field of work so thoroughly and in such detail that he is able to understand all the ramifications and interrelationships of his field of work with related fields of work. He is able to understand and visualize how their interrelationship and correlation affect a wide scope of activities.

2. Abilities:

The statements of what the individual must know are followed by statements listing what the individual must be able to do. These statements are expressed in terms of "capacity to," "ability to," "skill in," "proficiency in" and "technique in." Sometimes these are modified by suitable adjectives such as "demonstrated," "marked" or "outstanding" in order to show gradation. Examples are:

- a. ability to understand and follow simple oral or written directions.
- b. skill in simple hand tools.
- c. marked ability to organize work, make decisions and direct others.

3. Other Qualities:

Following the statements relating to abilities there are recorded those personal traits which are especially required of individuals in order to qualify for the particular position. Personal attributes are stated only when they have a particular significance in the performance of the job. Such qualities as citizenship, honesty, integrity, and industry, obviously required for all positions, are to be taken for granted as being required even though they are not expressed or stated in each qualifications statement. In some cases, attributes are covered by appropriate ability statements; that is, a trait such as "tact" is covered by the statement "ability to get along well with others" and an additional statement emphasizing the importance of "tact" would be redundant.

C. Experience, Training and Education: Under this section of the qualifications statement are stated the experience, training and/or education required by the average individual before he can possess the knowledges, abilities and other qualities specified for the job. This section is included in the qualifications statement with full recognition being given to the fact that experience and education requirements have value only as indirect indicators of an individual's possession of or lack of the fundamental qualifications which may be summed up as "ability to do the work." A personal knowledge of an individual's knowledge and ability qualifications and valid trade tests are, without doubt, more acceptable methods of measuring the individuals "ability to do the work." Such tools are available for filling only a small number of positions, however, and until occupational knowledge is sufficiently advanced to make possible a wider use of these or more reliable selection and appraisal tools, experience and education requirements must be accepted as the most useful tool available.

1. Experience: In all cases, experience is stated in a broad field related to the class of work involved in the position, with precise specializations included only when little or no doubt might exist as to its necessity for satisfactory performance of the job. All quantitative statements of experience are expressed in units of six months or one year. In many of the qualifications statements, the significant expression "progressively responsible experience" is used. As a general rule, the promotion pattern of an individual's experience is a reliable indicator of his ability, initiative and industry. An individual who entered a field of work and remained in the same position for five years is not considered to have five years of "progressively responsible experience" in that field. However, the individual who entered a field of work at grade CAF-5 and after one year was promoted to a CAF-7 position and after two years was promoted to a CAF-9 position and two years later was promoted to a CAF-11 position has five years of "progressively responsible experience" in that field of work.

2. Training and Education: Training and education requirements are expressed in the following three ways:

- a. number of years successfully completed
- b. semester hours successfully completed
- c. type of diploma or degree received

The phrase "one full year of college study" as used in the statements refers to the normal college year of two semesters or three quarters of work, which usually is of approximately nine months duration. An individual, therefore, who goes to college twelve months in one year and completes four quarters of work has  $1 \frac{1}{3}$  years of education as specified in the FSA qualifications standards. Similarly, an individual who is able to receive his bachelor's degree from a college or university in three years by attending summer school or completing four quarters of work in each of three consecutive years shall be allowed four years' education credit in applying his qualifications to the FSA statements. In all cases, the individual must have made a passing grade as specified by the school in order for the education to be acceptable. No credit can be given for a course in which the individual failed.

3. Experience and Education Equivalents: Considerable flexibility in the matter of experience and education equivalents and substitutions are permitted in the FSA qualifications statements. As a general practice, the requirements specified in this section of the statements will be stated in terms of satisfactory experience and any education that is equivalent, or an acceptable substitute, will be stated in a sub-paragraph under the experience statement. By permitting this flexible substitution practice, full recognition is made of the fact that present occupational knowledge is not sufficiently advanced to make possible the establishment of inflexible and detailed statements of experience and education.

D. Physical Standards: Under this section of the qualifications statement are included requirements of bodily conditions, muscular development, weight, height and conditions of health. Age limitations are sometimes included. Certain physical statements are applicable to all posi-

tions and are not specifically stated in each qualifications statement. For example, good health and freedom from contagious diseases are considered to apply to all positions and are not repeated in each qualifications statement. In some positions, however, certain physical attributes or qualities are so significant to satisfactory performance on the job that they are specified in the statements.

E. Examinations and Other Requirements: A number of positions in FSA require certain knowledges, abilities and skills that can be measured by objective tests. Also a few positions have unique requirements that do not logically come under the three sections discussed above. Such required tests and other miscellaneous but important qualifications requirements are stated under this section of the qualifications statement.

F. Additional Qualifications Which Are Desirable But Not Required: Under this section of the qualifications statement are included desirable knowledge, ability, experience, education, physical, and other requirements that are beyond the minimum requirements of the position. Possession of these desirable qualifications greatly increases an individual's potential usefulness to the Administration in that he may use them to increase his efficiency. Also they may enable him to assume additional responsibilities and qualify himself for promotion earlier than the individual who possesses only the minimum requirements. Certain "border line" qualifications that can not definitely be determined as necessary requirements also are included in this section. Naturally, an individual who possess some of the desirable qualifications in addition to the minimum requirements is preferable to one who barely meets the minimum qualifications requirements. The inclusion of this section in the qualifications statement is for the purpose of assisting the Personnel Officer in the selection process when he has several qualified applicants to choose from in filling a particular vacancy.

#### IV. PURPOSE AND USE OF QUALIFICATIONS STATEMENTS:

A. Purpose: The objective of qualifications statements as an aid in personnel administration is that of perfecting the technique of hiring by providing an adequate and unambiguous guide for securing for every vacancy the best qualified person and making maximum use of abilities of employees. An organization chart serves in building a good organization in much the same manner as a blueprint serves as the guide in the construction of a building. So the qualifications statement serves an organization in the same manner as a "materials specification" serves in the construction of a building. The employees of an organization are its "materials" and a good organization cannot be constructed without the proper kind of employees, just as a good building cannot be constructed without the proper kind of materials. Satisfactory administration and maximum efficiency cannot be gained in an organization unless steps are taken to establish and maintain adequate standards to guide the recruitment, selection and placement of employees.

B. Use of Qualifications Statements: Formal qualifications statements are purely administrative tools and are valuable only as they contribute to the overall efficiency in the management affairs of the organization. It is the responsibility of the Regional Personnel Officer to secure maximum utilization and practical application of these tools in the region. Almost every phase of the work of the Personnel Officer is directly or indirectly affected by the establishment of qualifications statements for positions in the Administration. Their principle uses lie in their application to employee

recruitment, testing, interviewing, selection, placement and as an aid to the position classification plan. By utilizing the qualifications statements and making them serve these various aspects of the personnel program, the Regional Personnel Officer will be able to do a better job and the regional personnel program will be more effective and more useful.

In issuing qualifications statements to be utilized in the field offices the National Personnel Division recognizes that such statements cannot remain static but will require continuous revision to correct fallacies revealed by practical application of the statements and by changes in job assignments and job descriptions. It is the responsibility of the Regional Personnel Officer to be on the alert for any changes in jobs that would require changes in qualifications statements for such jobs. The National Personnel Division encourages field offices to make suggestions which may improve the qualifications statements.

